
By Sir Wyly Grier, P.R.C.A., D.C.L.
A FEATURE of this year’s academy dinner, held at the York Club, was the impromptu speeches made in response to the president’s request. John M. Lyle was one of those called on and he closed a witty talk with a serious note on this year’s exhibition, especially in relation to the much discussed subject of a native Canadian art. He saw in the current show a variety of tendencies derived from the movements of the past decade. Art with us, he said, was in a state of flux out of which he believed an essentially Canadian expression might some day develop. This reference to variety, aptly sums up the character of the 1936 academy.

As stated by the president, in a lively review published in “The Curtain Call”, “the academy has been conservative in its tendency and prone to accept established traditions, but the present exhibition shows that it is eager to acknowledge originality of outlook and to encourage the daring impulses of enterprising youth.”

The art writer in “Saturday Night” seems to feel that the academy is rather undignified in “thus broadening its basis of inclusion” and refers to the show as “chaotic”. Would not a more considered viewpoint be that the academy is fulfilling its function when it offers as on this occasion a review of the whole field of art endeavour in this country?

That this exhibition discloses so varied a departure from the academic is an indication that young Canada is fully alive to the experiments which have made of art the exciting adventure it has become in our day. It is true that our modernism is a bit timid, and that the cult of the abstract and “unit one” have had few serious followers here. Generally speaking, our experimenters are working
out their ideas without departing drastically from the fundamentals of good drawing and design, as they have been understood throughout the ages.

Portraits do not lend themselves to experiments and these help to give what academic atmosphere there is, an academic flavour, however, tempered with certain virile qualities which are accepted as essential to the well painted portrait today.

These qualities may be specially noted in the president’s portrait of Dr. Pearson which holds the place of honour in the central gallery. George Reid’s Self Portrait gives pleasure to his many friends; Charles MacGregor is developing a broad handling and surety of touch which indicates his advance towards the first rank; technical virtuosity is evidenced in Archibald Barnes’ study, “Portrait in a Mirror”, while Kenneth Forbes gives us in his portrait of Mrs. Gooderham an example of his remarkable combination of life-like realism with an undefinable atmosphere of modernity.

Ernest Fosbery is represented by the strongest canvas we have seen by this artist; Marion Long justifies her election to full academic honours by the masterly quality of her portraits in this exhibition; Allan Barr also scores a success in his canvas of Mrs. Basil G. Morgan and in more dashing style Dorothy Stevens depicts Mrs. Hugh Eayres. Altogether, Canada can well be proud of her group of official portrait painters.

There are a number of figure studies which have a wider appeal than that of portraiture alone. Prominent among these is E. H. Holgate’s “The Skier”, a happily conceived design in which colour handling and arrangement unite in expressing with clarity and vigour the saga of Canadian Winter. Charles Comfort’s “Louse” is another departure from the ordinary by this brilliant young innovator who joins the ranks of the associates this year. In this, as in his dramatic creation “Smelter Stacks” he discloses his original viewpoint, striking powerful notes which add distinction to the show.

Lawren Harris Jr. is a still younger man who can be counted on to relieve the monotony of any exhibition. He selects, as in his “Chinese” and “Septuagenarian”, out of the way characters treating them in that sculpturessesque finished manner suggestive of Holbein and the pre-Raphaelites, which is a favourite method with some of the newer movements.

Prudence Heward’s “Rosaire” is of the same type, with more solidity in form emphasis. Yulia Biriukova’s “A Prairie Settler” presents yet another phase of current art in which the figure is treated more as a decoration with pattern and colour stressed throughout. Helen McClain’s “The Red Sweater” is a contribution in similar manner.

Following the trend in Europe and America where the modern critics’ ban has been lifted from the figure subject picture, this exhibition is en-

livened by several bits from real life. Outstanding among these are Franklin Arbuckle’s “Trolley Car Madonna” and his more serious study “Summer Morning”. This young graduate from our own College of Art well deserved the honour of election to “associate”; he has an unusually acute colour sense with considerable technical skill, while his adventure into the realm of the subject picture, indicates that he has a mental equipment which will lead us to expect from him important work in days to come.

“Children Playing” by Jack Bush is a subject picture which gives along with its strong colour and design a pleasant glimpse of neighborhood city life. More formal in arrangement is Joachim Gauthier’s “In the Garden”. This artist, known better for his landscape, shows commendable courage in departing into the field of figure composition.

The female nude on large scale is depicted in the studio and out of doors as well by H. MacNaughtan Farlow and by Gordon E. Pfeiffer. Their work is capable and with the portraits contribute to the academic atmosphere of the show.

More to the point from a native art standpoint is Arthur Heming’s “The Abitibi Fur Brigade”. Since he laid down his pen and took up the brush as a major vocation, this artist has made a notable contribution in his canvasses recording the story of Canada’s Northland; the romance of the explorer, the fur trade, the lumberman, and the miner, basing his pictures on materials secured on trips to the wilderness in the early nineties, when the Indians were still living a nomadic life and the last of the lumber drives were being taken down the northern rivers. Heming has given an invaluable record in these portrayals of a dramatic period in Canada’s story. The picture in this academy contains all the qualities which have caused his work to take high rank in the realm of artistic performance as well as in subject appeal.

Another imposing subject canvas which holds the central place in the western gallery is Kenneth Forbes’ equestrian picture “The Eglington Hunt” evidently the result of much careful study which has resulted in beautiful lines and movement in the horses and hounds. This picture, too, has the added quality of imagination. The sky is particularly fine and the effect of light flowing in from the rising sun and enveloping the moving cavalcade is admirably worked out. Forbes has found a theme in which he is in sympathy and which will be a pleasant interlude from the arduous work of portraiture.

Turning to Kay Daly’s “Madame Gagnon”, we have a subject picture different in motif and handling. A typical French Canadian interior with figure, painted with a vigour reminiscent of the Van Gogh masterpieces in the adjoining gallery.
This artist has given stimulating canvasses to recent exhibitions and is retaining her individuality in all she does.

Another original contribution comes from Margaret E. Wilson, a decorative fantasy in which children’s nude figures form an integral part of the design. The title, “Fun and Frolic” well describes the picture.

Landscape does not predominate to the extent it has usually done in our exhibitions, although most experiments of the past decade, starting with the first impressionists, but it is an intensely personal expression and an original Canadian achievement nevertheless.

The veteran, J. W. Beatty is well represented by canvasses rich in colour and tonal quality. He is further represented by the work of several of his pupils. Among these is Miss Alice A. Innes who received associate honours this year. Miss Innes shows herself a sincere student of nature and art,
of his time to the engrossing work of art education.

Peggy’s Cove appears in two diverse aspects. Minnie Kallmeyer shows this famous Nova Scotia art mecca in sunny mood with intense blue water, all done in her well known impressionist manner, while Harold Beamant, in the best thing we have seen from his brush, gives the lighthouse and rocks at dawn in a colour scheme of soft greys.

That versatile artist of many moods and mediums, Owen Staples, has also been down to the sea and with characteristic enthusiasm has painted the “Silver Sands” with the oncoming wave. This is Staples at his best.

Grey is used to good effect in A. J. Casson’s “Fire Haze” where it is combined with tree design based on natural forms and worked out in pleasing pattern.

Charles Simpson, whose work is better known in Toronto, now that we have had the opportunity of viewing his brilliant one man show at Eaton’s College Street, works in the palette of prismatic tints. His pictures are scintillating with light, taking you out into the open and making you feel that this world is a bright and cheerful place in which to dwell.

W. P. Weston, of Vancouver, another associate elect, makes a different appeal. His main emphasis is on form and he has created symbols for mountain, tree and moving water semi-realistic in type with suggestions of Japanese influence.

Mary E. Winch in the “Sawmill, Dorset” has worked out a design in large simplified areas with beautiful greys and just enough colour in the iridescent sunlit water gleaming beyond the building, to give zest to the composition.

Frank Carmichael’s “Sombre Valley” is another strong note with rich vibrating colour in the dark hill masses. Carmichael has widened the scope of his art in recent years, adding a poetic
interpretation of mood to the elements of design which have always been featured in his work.

The Sugar Bush appeared in two places in the central gallery, on the north wall painted by Manly MacDonald, in the free colourful style which he uses to such good effect, and on the south wall by a newcomer, Leonard Brooks, a young Canadian recently returned from a year's study in England and Europe. His work, while showing the influence of contacts abroad, has a leaning to the orthodox. His sunlit snow was painted with vivid realism.

Paul B. Earle is in sympathy with wide stretches of countryside, checkered with light and shade, and painted with broad full brush strokes. This year he has added a new note in his "Northern Lake".

We are pleased to see that Stanley Royle is back in
describing "Lowrey's Cauliflowers, Markham". A. Bieler, who paints the settler's first crop in rugged forms with a handling suggestive of a tough struggle with mother earth, and Eric Aldwinckle who in more refined technique has painted the Welsh hillsides in the decorative manner of an English poster.

Between these and Coburn's realistic winter road with its horse and sleigh under a sky of living blue there is a wide divergence representing perhaps the chaos deplored by the "Saturday Night" critic-for most visitors to the exhibition, however, this variety of outlook and treatment will have helped to make their tour of the gallery a stimulating experience.

Still life, which has reigned supreme for some years as the prize winning motif of the moderns is losing out in popularity as the subject picture or "The American Scene" as our friends to the south term it comes in, but there are still a goodly number being painted and this exhibition has its full measure.

Brooker's "Ski Poles" and boots is a veritable masterpiece of patient realism rendered in subdued colour and Mrs. Florence Proctor shows two ingenious compositions in bold shapes and startling colour: More harmonious is Frances-Anne Johnston's green "Zuleika".

Flower pictures hold their own in the public favour and they add cheerful notes to this year's academy. Jean Forbes in "Flowers", shows a technical mastery combined with satisfying colour harmony. Our accomplished flower painter, Miss Clara S. Hagarty, gives us something new in her pictures of flowers in their natural outdoor habitat in "June" and "July", while the president, in a surprise picture, which one fair visitor confided to us was her favourite in the whole exhibition, has painted "Magnolias" in purple harmonies.

The watercolour room was a real strength to this year's academy. This medium is being used by young experimental artists as well as by some of the more conservative painters, and here too was to be seen a large variety in technical manipulation and in subject matter.

Peter Haworth, president of the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour, has two excellent examples executed in his vigorous direct manner, strong in design and with a pleasing colour scheme of deep blues and greys. His wife, Mrs. B. Cogill Haworth is equally successful in her "Burnt Stump" motif. Henry Simpkins had the distinction this year of having associate honours conferred on him, in recognition of his achievement in watercolour. He is a young man of great promise and already handles the medium with a matured mastery. His work is realistic but attains a high aesthetic standard through his unusual colour instinct and the fresh quality of his broad fluid washes.

Charles Goldhamer's success in watercolour is due to his powerful yet refined draughtsmanship. He keeps his colours in low key and secures a vibrant effect by letting the white paper shine through in spots. Figures add to the interest of both his drawings.

Frederick G. Cross, a proficient exponent of the medium, in the best English manner works in Lethbridge, Alberta. His "Horses Drinking" deserved the central position accorded it on the east wall.

Hugh Jones, R.C.A. is an architect who goes beyond the use of the medium for architectural renderings, enjoying departures into the field of outdoor sketching where he achieves considerable success. His Italian notes were freely handled with all the charm of direct work.

Hugh Robertson of Hamilton works in clean broad washes and controls his colour and values admirably. There were a number of other good watercolours shown, some by young people whose names were new, indicating a strong revival in the use of this medium.

Although a number of Canada's leading architects are members of the academy, architecture was slightly represented in this exhibition. We understand that the academy has in view a new venture in the form of an industrial exhibition. This will be an opportunity for the profession to redeem itself and make up for its inadequate showing in recent academy exhibitions.

Another somewhat neglected department, that of drawings, designs and etchings, was given space in the hall. Here were the engravings in black and colour by the newly elected engraver associate, Leonard Hutchinson, a young man who has already taken high rank among Canadian print makers. E. Holgate and G. Pepper both display drawings with form and line boldly expressed. More delicate was the delightful rendering of "Old Apple Trees" by Barbara Jefferys. Herbert Raine and Ernst Neumann contributed the only etchings while Scott Carter had some distinguished engravings for book plates.

C.W. Jefferys, R.C.A. showed one of his historical drawings. When the story of Canadian art in this century is told, Jefferys' work in this department will be noted as one of the great artistic achievements of our time. The characters in this drawing of the old Militia of 1805 are full of human interest as well as being replete with historical accuracy in costumes and environment.

Coming to the sculpture, there is great variety in the style and technique of the work exhibited. It is interesting to see a gradual increase in the use of wood. Lilias Farley of Vancouver has a small decorative carving of a dancer, in mahogany, and there is a small study of a racoon by Harvey Sydenham.
Among the numerous heads are two excellent portraits (one of Mark Hambourg, which was unusually good) by Cleeve Horne and a well modeled head by Mrs. Pauline Johnson of Montreal.

Allan Cameron was represented by a compact group, mother and child, somewhat lacking in sympathy but very sculptural and well designed. There is a fine small Green Torso by Donald Stewart of Hamilton. The exhibitions would be improved by more work of this type.

An interestingly stylized “Canadian Goose” modeled for the McLaughlin Gardens in Oshawa by Fritz Winkler shows a successful simplification of design applied to architectural sculpture.

Two three-quarter length life size figures by Florence Wyle gave a new note to the sculpture section. Surface finish was subjected to more important qualities of design and arrangement of the masses. The composition was chaste with subtle stylization and the whole effect suggested restraint and repose.

Though most of the work is small for exhibition in a gallery, it is worthy of careful consideration.

The attendance at the opening night when Sir Robt. Faulkner officiated and throughout the exhibition indicated an increasing interest in art on the part of our people. And it is hoped that the next time the Academy comes to Toronto, the Art Gallery will be able to concede to its request for more space in which to adequately display the work of our painters who are now submitting their work from all parts of Canada, including Halifax and Vancouver.